

Decision 01-03-071 March 27, 2001

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Application of San Diego
Gas & Electric Company (U 902-E) for a Permit to
Construct the Garfield Substation.

Application 00-02-047
(Filed February 29, 2000)

O P I N I O N

I. Summary

San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E) seeks a permit to construct (PTC) a distribution substation in the city of El Cajon pursuant to Commission General Order 131-D (GO 131-D). Commission staff has conducted an environmental review and proposed a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) that would permit work to begin. Our order today approves the MND and authorizes construction of the proposed project known as the Garfield Substation (Substation).

II. Procedure

On February 29, 2000, SDG&E applied for a PTC for the Garfield Substation. Pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Pub. Resources Code §§ 21000-21176, the utility also submitted a Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA), which evaluates the potential environmental impact of the project. The PEA concluded that the substation will have no significant impact on the environment.

There have been no protests to the application.

The Commission's environmental staff, assisted by its environmental consultant, conducted on-site inspections and reviewed the utility's PEA. On July 21, 2000, staff issued for comment a Draft MND in compliance with CEQA, Rule 17.1(f) of the Rules of Practice and Procedure, and GO 131-D. The document was sent to federal, state, and county agencies and to owners of property located within 300 feet of the project site. Public review began on July 21, 2000, and ended on August 21, 2000. In addition, a site visit was conducted and public hearing held on August 18, 2000 in El Cajon.

As a result of public comment, changes were made to the Draft MND consisting of corrections of facts and clarification of mitigation measures. On September 21, 2000, SDG&E submitted a copy of an agreement with the owners of property adjacent to the substation which provides for a five-foot easement and new concrete driveway improvements in response to public comments and legal requirements.

In Resolution ALJ 176-3035, dated March 16, 2000, the Commission preliminarily categorized this application as ratesetting, and preliminarily determined that evidentiary hearings were necessary. While a public hearing was conducted, our order today changes the preliminary determination and concludes that evidentiary hearings are not necessary.

This is an uncontested matter in which the decision grants the relief requested. Accordingly, pursuant to Pub. Util. Code § 311(g)(2), the otherwise applicable 30-day period for public review and comment is waived.

III. Applicant

SDG&E, a public utility corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of California, is engaged principally in the business of providing

electric service in a portion of Orange County, California and electric and gas service in San Diego County, California.

IV. Background

The proposed substation is required to meet anticipated customer-driven electrical load growth and to prevent potential outages or disruption of service to existing and new SDG&E customers in the El Cajon/Fletcher Hills area. The planned 69/12 kV (kilovolt) Garfield Substation will be a local distribution substation. The substation will be located on the east side of Garfield Avenue in the city of El Cajon, abutting the northerly corporate boundary of the city of La Mesa. Development of the proposed substation will require retaining the existing Garfield 12/4 kV distribution substation site, and the acquisition, demolition, and use of the adjoining residential property to the north at 125 Garfield Avenue.

The ultimate configuration of the proposed substation is planned to be 69 mega voltamperes (MVA) with two 30 MVA transformers and eight 12 kV distribution circuits. A masonry wall with an average height of 10 ft. will enclose the substation area (approximately 150 ft. in length and 140 ft. in depth), and landscaping will be established as a part of substation construction. Access to the substation will be from two 30-foot wide driveway entries on Garfield Avenue.

Construction of the substation is scheduled to begin in the first quarter of 2001 with an in-service date of June 2001.

V. Garfield Substation

The substation will be reconstructed at its site on the east side of Garfield Avenue, south of Louise Court in the city of El Cajon in eastern San Diego County. The site is situated in a residential zone, bordered by existing

residential development to the north, south and east of Garfield Avenue (a two-lane residential street) and residential land uses to the west. The proposed site combines the existing 12/4 kV Garfield Substation site (APN 486-063-08-00) with the adjacent parcel (APN 486-063-07-00) to the north of the substation. The existing Garfield Substation parcel is rectangular in shape with an average width of 89 ft. and an average depth of 143 ft. The southerly property line of the existing parcel is contiguous to the city limit separating La Mesa and El Cajon. The existing Garfield Substation site has an approximate land area of 12,727 square feet (sq. ft.) (or 0.29 acres). A five-foot wide easement runs parallel to the south property line within the substation site. A 69 kV transmission line (Circuit 620, link between the Murray and El Cajon Substations) and a 12 kV distribution line (Circuit 407) on wooden poles is contained in the easement corridor.

The existing Garfield Substation site would be adequate to provide a new 25 MVA substation while retaining the existing 12/4 kV substation which cannot be retired. However, the existing site cannot provide sufficient land for the 60 MVA identified by the July 1998 planning area study, needed to prevent system overload in 2001.

To provide sufficient area for a new 60 MVA substation at this site, SDG&E must purchase the adjacent property at 125 Garfield Avenue, north of the existing substation. The adjacent property (APN 486-073-07-00) is rectangular in shape with an average width of 86 ft. and an average depth of 164 ft. It has an approximate land area of 14,104 sq. ft. (or 0.32 acres) and is zoned residential single family (R-1). A single-family residence with an approximate floor size of 1,100 sq. ft. currently occupies the lot. The residence would be removed from the lot to accommodate the 60 MVA substation construction. If acquired and combined with the existing substation parcel, the

combined parcels would have an average width of approximately 175 ft. and an average dept of 153 ft., for a total land area of approximately 26,381 sq. ft. (or 0.61 acres) of land area available for development.

The proposed new, two-bank substation at full build-out is planned to have 60 MVA ultimate capacity with two 30 MVA transformers, four tie lines and eight 12 kV circuits. The existing overhead 69 kV transmission line (Circuit 620) will be placed underground into the proposed site.

Access to the substation will be via two 30-foot wide driveways off Garfield Avenue. The substation perimeter wall will enclose an area approximately 150 ft. in length along Garfield Avenue by approximately 140 ft. in depth. The wall will be 10 ft. high and constructed of earth toned, split-face block to blend better with the surrounding area. The initial development will be landscaped using ornamental tree and shrub plant materials which will blend with the existing ornamental landscaping in the project area. There will be two 20-foot wide sliding gates at the end of the two driveways leading into the substation from Garfield Avenue. To enhance safety and reduce risk of electrocution, the substation wall will be of sufficient height and texture to prevent unassisted and unauthorized entrance. Barbed wire will be attached to the inside of the block wall, and will not be visible from the public street, side or rear yards. The entrance gates will be locked at all times and warning signage will be posted on the perimeter wall. Entry to an operational substation will be restricted to authorized SDG&E personnel.

VI. Discussion

This application requests a permit to construct an expanded substation in El Cajon to meet the increasing load growth in SDG&E's service area and to provide reliable electric power to utility customers.

An environmental review of the project was conducted by the Energy Division and its consultants. Drafts of a proposed MND and a proposed Mitigation Monitoring Program (MMP) were prepared, made public, and circulated for comment as required by law. Further, site inspections were conducted and a public hearing was held. Limited objections to the project were accommodated by applicant's acquiring an easement from a neighboring property owner and by revisions to the proposed landscape plan.

These accommodations were incorporated into the draft CEQA document prepared by staff which now has issued a final MND which it recommends to the Commission for adoption.

Findings of Fact

1. The Garfield Substation, a distribution facility with 60 MVA ultimate capacity, would provide additional electricity to meet expected growth in the El Cajon area and ensure reliability.
2. There have been no protests to the application.
3. The Commission's environmental staff conducted a review of applicant's project and issued a Draft MND and Draft MMP.
4. Following comments, the Commission's staff issued a Final MND and MMP.
5. Applicant has agreed to mitigation measures set forth in the Final MND and MMP.

Conclusions of Law

1. An evidentiary hearing is not required.
2. The final MND and Final MMP were prepared in compliance with the CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, and are adequate for the Commission's decisionmaking purposes.

3. The application should be granted, subject to the environmental requirements set forth in the Final MND and Final MMP.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The application of San Diego Gas & Electric Company for a Permit to Construct the Garfield Substation is granted.
2. The Final Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) and Final Mitigation Monitoring Program (MMP) are adopted.
3. The determination in Resolution ALJ 176-3035 with respect to this application is amended to determine that no evidentiary hearings are necessary.
4. Applicant shall fully implement the mitigation measures described in the MND and MMP.
5. Applicant shall enter into a cost reimbursement agreement with the Commission for expenses accrued from implementing the MMP. Compliance with this agreement is a condition of approval of this decision.
6. The Environmental Projects Unit of the Energy Division shall supervise and oversee construction of the Garfield Substation project insofar as it relates to monitoring and enforcement of adopted mitigation measures. The Energy Division may designate outside staff to perform on-site monitoring tasks. The Commission project manager (Energy Division, Environmental Projects Unit) shall have the authority to issue a Stop Work Order on the entire project, or portions thereof, for the purposes of insuring compliance with adopted mitigation measures. Construction may not resume without a Notice to Proceed issued by the Environmental Projects Unit of the Energy Division.

7. Applicant shall provide electro-magnetic force calculations to the Commission's Energy Division for any changes, modifications or additions to the facility that are not set forth in the application.

8. Applicant shall send a copy of this decision to concerned local permitting agencies not later than 30 days from the date of this order.

9. Application 00-02-047 is closed.

This order becomes effective 30 days from today.

Dated March 27, 2001, at San Francisco, California.

LORETTA M. LYNCH
President
HENRY M. DUQUE
RICHARD A. BILAS
CARL W. WOOD
GEOFFREY F. BROWN
Commissioners